

Message Text

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72

ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 SAM-01 DRC-01 /100 W
----- 084907

R 011835Z MAR 74

FM AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2280

C O N F I D E N T I A L GUATEMALA 1183

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, GT

SUBJECT: ELECTIONS: PUBLIC RELEASE OF RESULTS

1. GOG-CONTROLLED ELECTORAL REGISTRY FEB. 28 ISSUED ORDERS TO MAYORS THROUGHOUT COUNTRY NOT TO RELEASE PUBLICLY ANY ELECTION RESULTS AFTER CLOSING OF POLLS AT 1800 HOURS, MARCH 3. UNDER ELECTORAL LAW, MAYORS ARE CHARGED WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR TALLY OF RETURNS IN THEIR MUNICIPALITIES. GOG ORDER CHANGES PRACTICE OF PAST ELECTIONS DURING WHICH MAYORS HAVE RELEASED RESULTS TO PRESS AND RADIO AS THEY HAVE BECOME AVAILABLE. ELECTORAL REGISTRY, WHICH WILL MOVE ITS BASE OF OPERATIONS ON ELECTION DAY TO GUATEL (GOG-OWNED TELEPHONE AND TELEGRAPH COMPANY) TOWER IN ZONE 8 HAS ASSUMED FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR RELEASE OF PARTIAL AND FINAL RESULTS.

2. PRACTICAL EFFECT OF PAST PRACTICE OF ALLOWING MAYORS TO RELEASE RETURNS HAS BEEN TO GIVE PSYCHOLOGICAL BOOST TO VICTOR IN GUATEMALA CITY, WHERE OUTCOME WILL BE KNOWN LATE SUNDAY EVENING. RETURNS FROM REST OF COUNTRY USUALLY NOT AVAILABLE UNTIL FOLLOWING DAY. OPPOSITION FRONT CANDIDATE RIOS MONTT (WHO IS LIKELY TO RECEIVE LARGE VOTE IN CAPITAL) HAS CALLED ON HIS SUPPORTERS TO GATHER IN FRONT OF MUNICIPAL BUILDING FOR "VICTORY CELEBRATION" AFTER CLOSING OF POLLS ON MARCH 3. GOG PRESUMABLY HOPES TO HEAD OFF BOTH PSYCHOLOGICAL BOOST AND "CELEBRATION" BY ORDERING MAYORS, INCLUDING FRONT LEADER

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AND GUATEMALA CITY MAYOR MANUEL COLOM ARGUETA, NOT TO

RELEASE RESULTS. JORGE SKINNER KLEE, CAMPAIGN ADVISER TO COALITION
CANDIDATE LAUGERUD, TOLD US THAT GOG INTENDS TO HOLD BACK
ANNOUNCING RETURNS FOR CAPITAL UNTIL IT HAS RECEIVED RETURNS
FROM RURAL GUATEMALA, WHICH ARE EXPECTED TO FAVOR LAUGERUD.

3. DESPITE GOG'S ORDER NOT TO RELEASE RETURNS, MAYORS WILL
STILL HAVE ELECTION RESULTS AND CAN BE EXPECTED TO LEAK THEM
TO PRESS AND RADIO FREELY ON UNOFFICIAL BASIS. THIS "LEAKING"
LIKELY TO RESULT IN EVEN MORE CONFUSED SITUATION ON SUNDAY
EVENING.
MELOY

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